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## **LIVING CULTURES: TOO YOUNG TO BE HISTORY?**

**By Tom Vaughan**

Perpetuation of existing folkways seems to me to be properly within the realm of cultural resources management. Whether we like it or not, we are in it with both feet, ready or not, willingly or not.

The Service's approach to cultural history has been after-the-fact. Once a facet of history is dead, we drape it with the mantle of historical significance, preserve the tangible remains, and interpretively try to explain how it used to be. In many instances, this is the best we can do. The Anasazi aren't coming back to Mesa Verde to give tours of Cliff Palace.

More and more, though, we are involved in areas where our operations intertwine with activities of living cultural groups. We are a part of the Navajo Nation. We are part of the modern Hawaiian life style in East Maui and at Kalapana on the coast of the big island, Hawaii. Our management policies and styles will effect the Eskimo, Aleut, and Indian cultures of Alaska, as well as the Micronesians of Saipan. We have proposals before us that would put us in partnership with strong, intact Native American cultures at Zuni and at Awatovi. San Antonio Missions may present us with similar challenges in dealing with Hispanic Americans.

"Hyphenated" Americans, as well as Native Americans, increasingly are looking to the National Park Service to provide a setting for folk activities important to their heritage and identity. The National Folk Festival at Wolf Trap, Hispanic arts at Chamizal, and musical and dance programs in urban parks are examples of this. We are knee-deep in activities that make us a part of the lives of people with diverse cultural heritages, and I don't think we know what we are doing or where we are going!

In a larger context, perhaps the question is: "What should be the role of the National Park Service in America's history...yesterday, today, and tomorrow?"

This subject was broached by two discussion groups at the New Directions Superintendents Conference (one group dealt with forts; and the other with homes, birthplaces, and sites). One group suggested a Leopold-type report on National Park Service cultural resources management policies. This might not be a bad idea after all. Some specific topics for consideration come quickly to mind:

Should our role in the management of national cultural resources be passive, static, and reactive, i.e., only to preserve cultural resources after they have been entrusted to our care?

Should we take the theme studies of a few years ago a step further and make an effort to identify the historically significant events and places of today and arrange to save them while they are still intact?

I sometimes feel we treat anything over fifty years of age as "good history" and anything younger as "bad history." Then, when something gets old enough to be in the "good" category, we have to search high and low to find any remnants worth saving.

What are the cultural resources in the care and custody of the Service? They are Hawaiian temple sites, furnished Presidential birthplaces, sailing ships, and forts of all kinds. They also are, by accident rather than by grand design, reindeer herders, opihi pickers, rug weavers, and folk dancers.

What should be the cultural resources in the care and custody of the National Park Service? Should there be a conscious involvement in perpetuation of life styles and folkways (concern for culture carriers), or should we be committing ourselves henceforth only to the preservation of sites, structures, objects, and landscapes (concern for cultural materials)?

These questions have concerned me since I was district ranger at Haleakala and were emphasized by my experiences at the Hubbell Trading Post. Hubbell was like having a tiger by the tail...we were going somewhere, but I sure couldn't tell where, and existing concepts of cultural resources management offered (and still offer) little help in forecasting the future of an active trading operation.

My apprehension is that more managers, in more and more parks, are going to find themselves attached to the same sort of tiger, with the same lack of preparedness and guidelines I felt. Rather than continuing to be reactive (and very prayerfully so) after we find ourselves in these situations, let's consider the questions discussed above, and others where relevant, and determine a course for which we can then prepare.

I think different answers to these questions will lead the Service in very different directions. The implications and impacts are broader than just the effect on relations with Native Americans and selected hyphenated American groups. They affect all of us. Witness the swell of interest in ethnic identity, heritage, or "roots." My own feeling is that the preservation of cultural diversity in American life is as important as the preservation of genetic diversity in our biological resources.

Readers comments on problems they may be having in dealing with the unique concerns of Native American groups (if there are problems) and solutions they have found would be most welcomed. Those individuals with views differing from those of the author are also invited to write a response. Address your remarks to the Editor, CRM BULLETIN, Cultural Resources, National Park Service, 18th and C Streets, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20240.

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# ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THE HANDICAPPED AT HISTORIC SITES AND STRUCTURES

By Hugh C. Miller, AIA

Accessibility and accommodations for the handicapped at historic sites and structures in the National Parks go beyond the normal concepts of architectural and transportation accessibility. Adaptations to accommodate the handicapped must be done with feeling since we are dealing with the authentic physical remnants of our cultural heritage. These sites, structures, and objects have intangible values to understand and cherish. Feeling the crack of the Liberty Bell or the braille labels on a site model of the Independence National Historical Park represent easy ways to accommodate the perceptive senses and to provide handicapped persons access to cultural properties. On the other hand, there are many instances in which insufficient program definition creates or perpetuates barriers, often under the guise of historic accuracy.

When the First Bank of the United States was restored for the Bicentennial, there was no requirement in the program for accessibility, although a compromise design might have been developed when the rear entrance was restored. After completion of the project, an aluminum ramp was installed. Although this ramp got over the four risers to the stair platform, the sill remained as a barrier, and the ramp stood as a visual and physical intrusion. Subsequently, the ramp has been removed, but the barrier to the building remains.

The scope of historic resources within the National Park system is almost legend. As a reminder, we can recall the great variety of landmark buildings that are national shrines--Independence Hall, the Washington Monument, and Lincoln's Home.

We have cultural resources such as Russell Cave National Monument, a site in Alabama occupied by man as far back as 9000 B.P.; and Texas' LBJ Ranch with a historic period of national significance dating from 1972. There are great landholdings such as the almost 84,000 acres at Canyon de Chelly National Monument, or the minuscule .02 acres at the Thaddeus Rosciuszko House. We have forts with such varying locations as Fort Union in the prairies, and Fort Jefferson in the sea. There are buildings that are significant architecturally because they represent statements of style or experiments in building technology that are important beyond their associative history. The St. Louis Courthouse with its cast iron dome is an example of this resource. And, there are numerous vernacular buildings--the Johnson Farm in the Blue Ridge, or miners camps in Death Valley, and trappers line shelters at Mount Rainier. There are mills and bridges, ponds, canals, and earthworks. Even more difficult for access are gardens with their undulating terrain and ornamental steps, or ships with their narrow and steep passages. All are structures, and present problems for the physically handicapped visitor.

Many sites in the National Park Service are inaccessible by any definition. The Wilson Ranch at Guadalupe Mountains National Park is 100 miles from the state road over a rough track. There are life saving stations on remote islands and lighthouses on barrier dunes. The Service maintains historic sites that lie in inaccessible reaches of the tundra and the tropical rain forest. Even some sites in the center of the city, such as the Old State House in Boston, are accessible only to the agile who can side step traffic.

Archeological sites often are accessible with paved trails and sloping ramps that allow intimate contact with the site and its ruins, while others, because of their precarious locations, can only be visually experienced by all visitors, such as Montezuma's Castle or the White House dwellings. Others provide an awe inspiring focal point in the grand vistas of their canyon sites. The Cliff Palace Dwellings at Mesa Verde is an example of this.

Battlefields also are generally accessible by car or park transit systems with paved trails to overlooks and interpretive exhibits. Some historic sites having surfaces paved with such period materials as brick or

cobble stones, stone curbs, etc. provide serious impediments. The sidewalk and soon to be restored street at Harpers Ferry are typical of the uneven surface and rough texture of historic pavements.

In some structures, there are too many hazards involved to permit public access. The 171 iron steps into the forehead of the Statue of Liberty or 190-foot climb up the spiral stairs to the Hatteras Light are examples of public use areas that perhaps should be closed to all visitors. The question here goes beyond access problems into visitor safety and preservation of the resources, and it must be addressed by management exclusive of handicapped accommodation problems.

By and large, the problem of access to historic structures centers on those facilities having floors raised above the ground level that can be reached only by steep and sometimes narrow steps. Inside, it is not unusual to find narrow doors, narrow twisting passages, and narrow, steep and winding stairs. Many of these historic structures are complete architectural statements surviving intact from their historic period. Others have been restored with historic accuracy to capture the aesthetics of the architectural design and the subtle qualities of period craftsmanship.

The buildings of Independence Square fall into the above category. The fine early 18th century Statehouse survives almost intact. From its traditional Chestnut Street entrance, it is inaccessible. However, at the Square entrance (which is often thought of as the prime entrance since it is on the side of the building often depicted in school books and promotional literature), there are fewer steps; and it is possible to provide a temporary ramp for visitors in wheelchairs. This temporary accommodation does not compromise the visitor or the building. Visitors go to the east wing building for the tour, and at that time, handicapped persons are advised on the procedures for entering the building. Service personnel will then install the ramp and assist the visitor into the first floor housing the Assembly Room and the Supreme Court of the Province of Pennsylvania and the Central Hall. Unfortunately, the grand stairway in the tower becomes a barrier. It prevents people in wheelchairs from visiting the second floor's Governor's Council, Committee Room, and Long Gallery.

The other park buildings on Independence Square are accessible on the first floor. Congress Hall is generally accessible over the two steps at the visitor entrance off the Square. Inside, lies the great space of the House of Representatives. From here, over a small change in level, the visitor enters the grand two story stair hall. This original stairway has the longest run and steepest rise of any in early America and is immediately a barrier to the second floor. The Senate Chamber, with its original decorative ceiling and furniture, and the congressional committee rooms on the second floor are not accessible to people who can not climb.

The other historic building on the Square open to the public is Old City Hall. This building houses exhibits, and the first floor is accessible over a step at the entrance. The problems of access at Independence Hall, Congress Hall, and Old City Hall are not unique to this site. We are dealing with nationally significant buildings that are architecturally complete design statements; they have integrity of original fabric; and as such, they provide little if any opportunities for retrofitting elevators or architectural ramps to accommodate the handicapped.

Perhaps one building that epitomizes this problem is the Longfellow House in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The house, one of the finest Georgian mansions in the United States, was used by Washington as his headquarters in 1776 and was Longfellow's home for most of his adult life. The building is completely biographical with Longfellow furnishings, objects, and memorabilia. The house appears to be inaccessible. It sits well back from the street and is approached by a long brick wall with steps up a terrace. The front steps are steep; the platform is shallow; and the doors are narrow. Inside the house, spaces are ample, but passage sometimes is restricted by the original furniture and household objects in the rooms. The floors are covered with a variety of carpets and throw rugs that are part of the historic furnishings. This biographical collection makes accommodation of the visitor in the house difficult. But, this house perhaps is not inaccessible. Accretions to the building have added many elements onto the Georgian home. There may be opportunities to construct an unobtrusive ramp on these back buildings and porches. There is also a

driveway to this area and a small parking area. All these spaces may be used, not only for access by the handicapped, but for a staging area for groups of visitors. The use of the house should be limited to small conducted tours which can accommodate all visitors in the fully furnished rooms on the first floor. Access to the second floor is limited. However, the visitor's interest in the upstairs rooms may be satisfied by interpretive devices in other parts of the house or site. Imaginative approaches often will provide options for full use of a historic house despite its many problems of accessibility.

The Lincoln Memorial for many years was thought of as inaccessible. However, careful analysis of the structure located unobtrusive spaces for the installation of an elevator and ramps while not compromising the grand design. The work cost a million dollars -- a cost justifiable given the structure's national significance and high visitation rates.

In historic structures undergoing restoration for adaptive use such as the structures at Fort Yellowstone, there are many design opportunities for accommodating the handicapped in the necessary public spaces. Provisions may even be made for handicapped staff. These are design problems that can be solved by understanding the architectural character of the historic structure and the limitations and suitability for accessibility solutions.

Unfortunately, the National Park Service has had some major misses in not making its historic structures accessible at the time that they were being restored. Perhaps the worst example of this oversight was the adaptive restoration of Philadelphia's Second Bank of the United States into a gallery for the portraits of the signers, generals, and patriots of the American Revolution. This building is part of Independence Historical National Park and was restored on the exterior to its historic appearance. However, the interior was adaptively restored to accommodate the modern galleries housing the paintings. Although most of the galleries are accessible by elevator, the elevator is not. The entrance to the building is at the top of a monumental flight of steps. There were opportunities during the restoration process to design a ramp leading to a terrace which would have provided access to a basement level elevator lobby. Unfortunately, this was not done, and these lower spaces are now used for electrical and mechanical rooms.

Also at Independence National Historical Park is the Pemberton House, a reconstructed townhouse now housing the exhibits of the early Army and Navy. Since this building was a reconstruction, it should have been possible to design a handicap access into the building without distraction from the architectural configuration and details of this replicated Georgian building.

A scale of buildings with access problems range from furnished mansions, such as the Frederick Vanderbilt Mansion at Hyde Park to modest houses, such as the John F. Kennedy Birthplace in Brookline, Massachusetts. At the Vanderbilt Mansion, the problems are typical. The main floor is fully accessible with ample space to move around and view the rooms. However, the flamboyant curving stairway to the second floor becomes a barrier, making the opulence of the bed chambers and baths inaccessible to the handicapped. There is a service elevator in the rear stair which might be modified to accommodate a wheelchair, and there are also several accessible buildings that could be used for interpretation of the restrictive areas with audio-visual programs or remote video cameras.

At the more modest end of the scale is the John F. Kennedy Birthplace. It too has a flight of stairs to the porch and first floor entrance. The hallway is not grand, and the circulation is a cul-de-sac. The access to the second floor bed chamber displays is limited by a single flight of stairs. This building is of itself the historic site. There are no ancillary structures or space to provide for ancillary interpretation. At small sites like this, access and visitor services for the handicapped are very difficult.

Another typical problem is found at the Lincoln Home in Springfield, Illinois. The house is not accessible. There is a flight of steps from the street to the yard level and another set of steps to the first floor. The public use spaces of the interior are small with a circuitous movement of visitors on narrow stairs and in cul-de-sac passages. To compound these problems, the site has a high visitation rate of over a half million people a year. There may be alternatives at this historic house that could be used at other sites

to provide a fuller visitor experience without the impact, the potential hazard, and real inaccessibility of the house tour. The contemporary visitor center provides an opportunity to give the visitor a better experience. In modern structures, full size rooms could be reconstructed, furnished, and interpreted in a "walk into" situation that would take the pressure off the house and provide a fuller experience. These options for "out of building" interpretation should not be considered as alternatives. They should be developed as part of a comprehensive cultural resource management plan that includes preservation as well as interpretation.

Problems of retrofitting historic structures for barrier-free access can be related to the problems encountered in retrofitting for safety purposes. It is a design problem with a great number of given factors--existing conditions, standards, and emotions. The knee-jerk response is not unusual when the latter factors are applied without a full understanding of the problem. Many Park Service sites are, by definition unsafe. One of the best examples is the fortification at El Morro, San Juan, Puerto Rico, with its unguarded parapets, open embrasures, and sheer drops. There are steep steps and ramps without handrails. To provide guardrails and other protective devices to meet OSHA standards would destroy the physical and visual qualities of the architecture and its historic function. Many of our exhibits and architectural elements have built-in hazards, whether it happens to be industrial sites such as the machinery and material in a chain forge or the protection of stoops, bulkheads, leader boxes, and railings from an 18th century row of townhouses. Visitor accessibility and safety are overwhelming, and these aspects of visitor use must be considered as the modulating aura of common sense. Fencing the edged walls of a fort or the edges of canal locks becomes idiotic, but it has been tried. Fencing on canal locks not only destroyed the historic stone work and the visual integrity of the site, but provided a new hazard when visitors climbed or swung on the fence. We must recognize that there are certain hazards to structures whether they are parapets of fortifications, or canal locks, or walls, or steep 18th century stairs.

The question arises as to how do we recognize the hazards and accommodate them without compromising the values of the historic fabric. A good case study is the historic stone steps in Harpers Ferry. A delicate handrail which had been in place for a number of years was replaced with a rail with a two-and-a-half-inch stanchion drilled into the natural stone stairway. This new handrail has permanently damaged the historic structure and does not solve the problem of the irregular rise and uneven treads of the stairs carved from native stone. The alternatives to this action could have been to build contemporary stairs adjacent to the structure or to close the stairs entirely and use the ramping street for reaching the upper levels.

Another example of reacting to a safety problem without using common sense is the yellow paint on the exterior face of the one riser stall at the highly ornamental building entrance. All accidents here have been the result of people falling down that step rather than up the step. So, painting the exterior of the step yellow does not warn individuals leaving the building.

Accessibility, like safety, is a design problem to be approached with full consciousness of the characteristics and limitations of the historic structure. Doors, sills and thresholds are problems. Yet, there may be straightforward solutions in a design element that is temporary in appearance, but permanent in installation, such as a short ramp over a step transition from the porch to the interior of a house. Thus both accessibility and safety are provided for all visitors. The solutions of accessibility should not be exclusive; they can be designed into the building and the system so the Park Service can meet its legal requirements as well as its public responsibility to make its cultural resources in the parks accessible for all.

# STUDY UNDERWAY ON DESERTIFICATION IN NEW MEXICO

Three researchers in a Joint National Park Service-University of New Mexico program are looking at how marginally productive land, which covers much of the state, can sometimes deteriorate and become less productive. At its extreme, this process, known as desertification, can turn previously usable land into waste, according to Rosalie Fanale, a cultural anthropologist with the Service's Remote Sensing Division, Southwest Cultural Resources Center, Albuquerque.

Fanale has developed an interdisciplinary research program, called the Southwestern Desertification Project, to measure these phenomena in the San Juan Basin of New Mexico. Also involved in the project are James I. Ebert, an archeologist with the division, and Thomas R. Lyons, division chief.

"Although desertification has often developed from natural causes alone, the current international effort is especially concerned with the impact of human use and land management practices on fragile dryland environments," Fanale said.

She went on to say that among researchers there is general agreement that desertification is accelerated through such activities as agricultural development, burning, overgrazing, urbanization, and population increases. "The desertification process is first a human problem and needs to be assessed as it relates to both people and the physical and biological elements of the environment," she said.

The project will use remote sensing data to determine the mobility patterns of the people in the basin area and to develop an index of vegetational diversity. Remote sensing data, which is gathered from aerial and satellite surveys, is necessary because of the difficulties associated with making repeated ground level surveys over the large land areas involved. "We believe remote sensing, which allows the measurement of environmental variables at a wide range of scales and resolutions, is an indispensable adjunct to the study of desertification," said Ms. Fanale.

So far, the indicators which scientists have generally agreed upon as representative of the desertification process have all been expensive and complex to use, in part, because of the lengthy ground surveys involved for each indicator. If some of these indicators can be combined and adapted to remote sensing techniques, the study of desertification would be greatly improved. Fanale added, "One goal of the project is the development of composite indicators of desertification. While these indicators will initially be formulated specifically in the San Juan Basin, they have potential for application in other areas."

The San Juan Basin is a 25,000 square mile area located primarily in northwestern New Mexico, and extends into Colorado. Most of the basin is rangeland, with limited agriculture. The basin is occupied primarily by Native Americans, especially Navajo pastoralists.

"The Navajo have grazed sheep and other animals over most of the basin's land area," Fanale said. "Navajo land use is most often blamed for the overgrazing and erosion throughout the basin. We are postulating that limited access to traditional grazing locales has been crucial in leading to overgrazing and degradation of rangeland."

One effect of desertification is that the kind of plants found over the area involved begin to change. "Through time, the desirable species are depleted more quickly than those which are less palatable and therefore undesirable," said James Ebert. "Eventually, the undesirable species predominate." He states further that measuring the types and numbers of plants in an area has been suggested as one way of monitoring desertification caused by overgrazing. The problem is that this requires extensive field work.

"One possible solution to the problem of having to touch and name plants on the ground is the definition of general characteristics of the environment which may indicate systemic change in a wide variety of geographical settings, " he said. "One of these is vegetational diversity."

Because the test is still being developed, he said a key part of the project will be to better determine exactly what the index measure will be. "By monitoring vegetative diversity through time, it should be possible to determine not only whether a process of environmental change is taking place in any area, but possibly what stage this change is in," Eber said.

In this project, the researchers are assuming that vegetational changes which have already occurred in the basin are related to changes in the Navajo grazing patterns. "We are postulating that Navajo resource use strategies, in the past much more than today, centered around a finely tuned environmental knowledge, plus access to a large and diverse area, so that mobility patterns could vary according to pasture quality and productivity," said Fanale. For this reason, she will be gathering data on the ecological, social, and economic forces which have influenced grazing in the basin.

"Results from the sample sites will allow us to relate changes in mobility to vegetation change," she explained. "Comparing our findings from various areas will permit us to show variations in this process in different settings. By comparing mobility patterns and environmental and economic constraints between areas, we will then be able to show relationships between different social factors and different environmental impacts."

The result, Fanale said, would be a tool which could help provide the information needed to properly manage arid and soon-to-be-arid lands.

This article is from the University of New Mexico's Campus News, Vol. 14, No. 10, January 18, 1979.



# A NEVER ENDING TASK

**By Harry Pfanz**

Other historic preservationists have problems too, some even more extensive than ours. I suspect that the British National Trust's inventory of furnishings far exceeds our own, and even though they are old hands at its care, they still find them- important problems. Chief among these is how to preserve elegant furnishings of centuries before, while leaving them open to public viewing.

In his article "Housekeeping and House Keeping" in the Spring 1978 issue of the National Trust, John Cornforth indicated that, historically, housekeepers took great care to keep the furnishings of England's great houses in a state of newness. Carpets, chairs, and gilded mirrors were expected to last several generation's and to become a part of the family's heritage. The household servants kept these exquisite purchases covered when not in use, and blinds carefully drawn. They operated under the premise that "the contents of a house should come before the fleeting pleasure of a family and its guests."

This was good practice then, but today, the Trust must make its holdings available to the public rather than to family guests. That presents another problem. On this, Cornforth observes: "Visitors must see what they have come for, but only a handful are so selfish as not to understand the responsibilities of today for tomorrow and, if it is explained, almost all will readily appreciate why there are case covers on most chairs in a set, why a bed should have case curtains, and why blinds should be drawn. It can be explained in practical terms and in historical terms too...and also it can be pointed out that people have come to see objects in the context of a house and not a museum and that a code of conduct for the house that includes reducing the level of light objects will deteriorate or even disappear or they will have to be removed to the neutral but controlled conditions of a museum and be seen behind glass."

Through such careful balancing of visitation and preservation, the needs of tomorrow will be remembered without detracting from the pleasures of today.

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# WOOD PRESERVATION: POISON FREE

By Hugh C. Miller, AIA

As a follow-up to your concerns about toxicity in wood preservatives as detailed in the CRM BULLETIN Vol. 1, No. 2, June 1978, we pass on to our readers the results of studies by the Forest Products Laboratory, U.S. Forest Service, on the use of water repellent materials without preservatives. This testing began twenty years ago. Window units were dipped for three minutes in either a solution of water repellent preservatives or water repellents without preservatives and exposed to weather conditions in Madison, Wisconsin.

William C. Feist, Forest Service chemist, reports that the untreated comparison control window units completely fell apart after six years, but that little deterioration occurred in the treated window units. There was very little difference in the weathering between the water repellents with preservatives and those without.

This testing shows that water repellent treatments alone can provide excellent decay resistance in outdoor woodwork without the addition of toxic preservatives. Water repellents can represent a saving of money and resources and Judicious avoidance of preservatives in such items as picnic benches, birdhouses, sheds, walkways, decks, fence rails, and other above ground wood construct ion. The Forest Products Laboratory recommends wood repellent treatments be done before or after construction and before painting. It should be particularly valuable in replacement and repair work for historic structures. A simple formula is:

Exterior varnish	3 cups	
Paraffin wax		1 oz.
Mineral spirits or		
paint thinner or turpentine	Add to make	1 gal.

The treatment is best done by dipping the wood for one to three minutes in a solution. If dipping is inconvenient, liberal brush application can be made paying particular attention to heavy treatment of all board ends and Joints. Treated surfaces can be painted after three days of warm drying weather. In fact, the paint should be better over the treated surface than over untreated wood.

For further information on this subject, we suggest that you contact the Forest Products Laboratory, P.O. Box 5130, Madison, Wisconsin 53705. The Lab is operated under the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture and in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin.